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Patty tells NOW she's a feminist

LOS ANGELES (UPI) — Patricia Hearst considers herself a feminist, is not afraid for her safety after she is released from prison, but worries about difficulties in getting married and finding a job once she is free.

In a conversation with Gloria Allred, coordinator of the Los Angeles chapter of the National Organiztion for Women, Hearst said she is not bitter about her fate and wishes the public could understand that "the kidnapping started all of this."

Allred visited Hearst in prison this week, and yesterday said the inmate "considers herself a feminist."

Allred met with Hearst for two hours Wednesday at the federal prison in Pleasanton to explain NOW's recent decision to support legal efforts to obtain her release from custody.

She said Hearst thinks "there is a small group of cuckoos interested in harming her," but no longer worries about that.

"She feels that the SLA (Symbionese Liberation Army) had their chance to kill her," she added, "and they blew it."

Allred said Hearst told her she has plans to be married but is not sure when.

"She hopes that the marriage will occur when she is released from prison," Allred said. "But if she must serve the six more years . . . it may be that the marriage may have to occur in prison."

Allred refused to name the man Hearst plans to marry but added, "I don't think it's any secret."

Hearst has been linked romantically to Bernard Shaw, a San Francisco policeman who was her bodyguard.

Allred said the granddaughter of William Randolph Hearst was also worried that she might not be able to hold a regular job when she is released because "insurance companies won't insure the company she would work for" because she would be considered a high risk.

She said Hearst was also concerned that her high-risk status would hinder her from obtaining automobile insurance.

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Gloria Allred
National Organization for Women
Los Angeles, California

Dear Gloria Allred:

On Friday I was reading the San Francisco Examiner from my cell at Santa Rita. I came across an article about Los Angeles NOW's decision to support Patricia Hearst's release from prison. The main thing that sparked my anger was the fact that NOW calls itself a feminist organization, acts in the name of feminism, and yet fails to acknowledge the very existence of vast numbers of women who need their support.

NOW has frequently been considered an organization that puts the interests of more privileged women - professionals and upper middle class - above those of poor and working women. Perhaps this is because the ordinary woman is not a public figure - she has no access to the media. Perhaps it is because the ordinary woman does not have the same leisure time to organize and fight the objects of her oppression when they are so numerous and she barely has enough hours in the day to keep her own head above water. Or perhaps this is because the problems of most women's lives are so commonplace as to be duplicated over and over again in the homes, schools, prisons, workplaces everywhere. The widespread oppression of all these nameless, faceless women is ignored so that NOW can focus on the plight of those women who opportunistically view women's liberation as the method for seizing their half of the corrupt patriarchal pie.

Recently publicized reports of Los Angeles NOW's support for efforts to gain Patricia Hearst's release from prison is further proof that NOW is only interested in the liberation of <u>some</u> women not <u>all</u> women. I do not speak to the issue of whether Patricia Hearst should or should not be released from prison. Rather I question the priorities of a group that claims to be feminist. The prisons and jails are filled with women who deserve

to be released. Some are innocent and were unjustly convicted by courts who shuffle individuals through the machinery as if they were cattle. Others are guilty only because their acts were judged by a patriarchal system that punishes women severely - as juveniles for being runaways or recalcitrant; as prostitutes for selling a commodity that is promoted and hyped throughout our culture - their sexuality - instead of giving it away; as mothers who will provide for their families in any way they can; as fighters who defend themselves against physical assault; as women who aggressively seize options that will better the material conditions of their lives when this society fails to permit meaningful work for women. Why does NOW choose to ignore these women so great in number and need? They need assistance fighting their cases in court, support in resisting dehumanizing conditions in the prisons, help in struggling to survive once they do get out of prison.

The word "feminist" is not just a label or a name. It represents a solidarity with other women based on understanding and acting against the many forms that male supremacy takes. Of the sisters I've met in the penitentiary, most would not call themselves feminists but they are far closer to the heart of feminism than many of the self-satisfied women in NOW. They stick together and fight right along side their sisters. NOW represents a perversion of feminism as long as it persists in turning a deaf ear to the many in order to wave banners for the privileged few. As such, NOW will never contribute to the liberation of oppressed women but will instead become a new functionary for the oppressor.

Emily Harris